DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 043 CE 008 256

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TITLE Career Education and Work Experience Education: Can We Join Together?
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 11p.; Speech presented to the Western Association of Cooperative and Work Experience Educators (Las Vegas, Nevada, February 7, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; *Cooperative Education; Coordinators; *Educational Experience; Educational Objectives; Interagency Cooperation; School Community Cooperation; *School Industry Relationship; Speeches; *Work Experience

ABSTRACT

Career education and work experience education are discussed in terms of the common goal of education as preparation for work, and three basic common values: (1) The importance of work to both individuals in society and to society itself, (2) the need for and potential of experiential learning, and (3) the need to involve the formal education system and the business-labor-industry-professional community in a collaborative relationship in ways that will expand student learning opportunities. Basic career education concepts are compared with work experience concepts. The concept of work, as a humanizing term, is discussed, along with implications for change in the role and function of work experience educators. The goal of this paper is to provide work experience educators with some basis for determining their own directions for professional change growing out of the career education concept. One point noted is that the career education concept considers work experience, in addition to that found in classrooms per se, to be an important opportunity to be made available to all students. (TA)

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CAREER EDUCATION AND WORK EXPERIENCE EDUCATION: CAN WE JOIN TOGETHER?

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Introduction

Career education and work experience education share a common goal and three basic common values. The goal we share is an attempt to emphasize education, as preparation for work, as one of the basic functions of American education. The three basic common values I think we share include: (a) a value regarding the importance of work to both individuals in our society and to the society itself; (b) a value regarding the need for and the potential of experiential learning; and (c) a value regarding the need to involve the formal education system and the business-labor-industry-professional community in a collaborative relationship in ways that will expand student learning opportunities.

While it is important to recognize these commonalities, it is equally important to recognize that these two movements - career education and work experience education - came into being in different ways and with differing initial reasons. Career education was begun, and continues to operate, as a vehicle for the total reform of American education through changing the basic, internal professional commitments of all educators. It has come on the educational scene as a concept, not as a program. Work experience education, on the other hand, was begun many years ago basically as a special kind of program emphasis purposely designed to serve only a portion of the student body.

Remarks prepared for presentation to the Western Association of Cooperative and Work Experience Educators, Las Vegas, Nevada. February 7, 1976.

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As work experience education has changed in its conceptualization and in the scope of its activities, it has seemed to me that it is moving closer and closer to embracing the career education concept. My purpose here is to provide a basis for practicing work experience educators to decide, for themselves, exactly how close this relationship has become and to decide the extent to which they feel it desirable to move even closer.

To accomplish this purpose, I would like to divide this presentation in three parts. First, it seems important that I review briefly the broad conceptual base of work experience education. Second, I want to devote particular attention to the conceptual meaning of the four-letter word "work" as it is used in career education. Finally, I would like to raise a number of questions which work experience educators must answer for themselves as they consider relationships between career education and work experience education.

Basic Concepts of Career Education

There is no need to review here the entire range of career education concepts. Instead, I have selected a very few which I think are most germane to the basic question of similarities and differences between career education and work experience education.

The first of these concepts deals with definitions. Three definitions are essential to understand as a basis for examining the generic definition of career education in the OE policy paper, AN INTRODUCTION TO CAREER EDUCATION. All three are contained in that paper. They include:

a. "work" - conscious effort, other than that involved in activities whose primary purpose is either coping or relaxation, aimed at producing benefits for oneself or for oneself and others

b. "career" - the totality of work one does in his or her lifetime

c. "education" - the totality of experiences through which one learns

These three definitions have led us to offer the following generic definition of career education:

> "career education" is defined as the totality of experiences through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work as part of her or his way of living.

Taken together, these definitions form the following basic career education concepts: (1) "work" includes both paid employment and unpaid work; (2) since "career" is the totality of work done in one's whole lifetime, one does not "change" careers - rather, one's career develops starting in the pre-school years and continuing into the retirement years; and (3) "education" and "schooling" are not synonymous terms - "education takes place in more places than school buildings, in more ways than through books, and "teaching" is not limited to persons whose occupational title is "teacher."

The second basic career education concept is that career education is for all students at all levels of education. It must begin no later than kindergarten and continues through all of formal education and all of adult education. No student at any level is potentially more in need of career education than any other.

The third basic career education concept is that it is not something schools can do by themselves. Instead, career education is pictured as a collaborative effort involving the formal education system, the business-labor-industry community, and the home/family structure. The key word here is "collaboration" - which obviously implies a much closer relationship than the word "cooperation."

The fourth basic career education concept is that of infusion into all parts of education and into all educational programs. It is not a new program to be added to the many that now exist.

Finally, the word "fusion" is equally as important as the word "infusion" in the career education concept. Career education, conceptually, is a fusion of two philosophies - the philosophies of vocationalism and of humanism - with two processes - the career development process and the teaching/learning process. Time will not permit me to explain this concept, but I hope it is one you will think about.

These, then, are the basic concepts of career education that seem to me to be most germane to questions of relationships between career education and work experience education. I will return to their implications in the final portion of this presentation.

The Concept of "Work" in Career Education

I would like to turn now to a more detailed explanation of the concept of "work" as that term is used in career education. I have a feeling that it may differ, in several ways, from the operational meaning of "work" as it is currently used in work experience education. My purpose is not to convince you that our notions regarding "work" are right. Rather, my only puspose is to try to make clear both our concerns and our concepts regarding work.

As used in career education, the word "work" is a very humanistic one indeed. It refers to the human need of all human beings to do - to accomplish - to achieve - to produce. It is the need we all have to know we are valuable and are valued because we have done something - to know that someone needs me for something - that the world is, in some way and to some

extent, benefited because I exist and I have done. As the term is used in career education, "work" is not properly thought of as a societal obligation. Rather, it is best thought of as a human right of all human beings.

In my view, it is through "work" that each of us best discovers who we are. If we were to ask any stranger to tell us who he/she is, that stranger would most probably begin by identifying himself/herself to us by relating his/her name, hometown, physical characteristics, and, perhaps, even his/her age. Such a description, while helpful in distinguishing one individual from another, is not at all helpful in understanding that individual. We best understand another person primarily through her/his accomplishments - through what the individual has done. The existentialist will tell us that any individual can become aware of his/her being through simply a contemplation process. We would contend that the difference between "awareness" and "understanding" is very great indeed. "Work" is a means by which any individual - youth or adult - can understand himself/herself and, in addition, help others understand who he/she is.

More importantly, "work" is a means available to each of us for discovering why we are - the purpose we have for being on this earth. It is a way available to each of us for finding a personal meaning and meaningfulness in our existence. It is a means available to every human being - young and old alike - for understanding that she/he is important and worthwhile.

I have a feeling that we have spent far too much time in education telling our pupils they are important and too little time letting them discover their own importance through those things they have been able to accomplish. We have spent far too much time telling our pupils how they

have failed and too little time letting them discover how they have succeeded. That is why career education seeks to impart a "success," rather than a "failure," strategy into the total teaching/learning process. There is an important point to be made here that demands I take time to give you two additional definitions that I use in career education. These are: (a) "vocation" - defined as a primary work role; and (b) "occupation" - defined as a primary work role in the world of paid employment. Viewed in the context of these two definitions, it is obvious that every student has a "vocation" - a primary work role - namely, the vocation of a "student." We in career education do not believe that the student needs to leave the classroom in order to experience "work."

Having said this, let me hasten to add that, in no way, do those of us in career education consider "work experience" logged as a student in a classroom to be sufficient. We are well aware of the fact that no individual's "work" can be limited to that of "student." Most persons, with the exception of those who become educators, will spend much of their adult life working in non-educational settings. <u>All</u> persons must be prepared to apply the concept of work in productive use of leisure time. Most persons will spend a considerable portion of their lives in the world of paid employment. For all of these reasons, we in career education consider "work experience," in addition to that found in classrooms per se, to be an important opportunity to be made available to all students.

We in career education are not so naive as to believe that the concept of work, as I have described it here, is to be found available today in all jobs in the world of paid employment. We are well aware of the fact that many individuals who find jobs fail to find work. Instead, they find

"labor" - a condition which is disliked, is performed largely only for survival purposes, and which brings little, if any, personal sense of accomplishment or pride to the individual. We think this condition can be greatly alleviated if more attention is paid to humanizing the work place - and we are active supporters of such efforts. At the same time, we realize that humanization of the work place is a long way off for many occupations and, for many others, can be accomplished only to a relatively small extent. That is why career education insists that unpaid work - including volunteerism, work of the full-time homemaker, and work in which individuals engage as part of their leisure time - be included in the career education concept. After all, those persons who find themselves in dehumanizing jobs in the world of paid employment are no less important as human beings than are any others. We could not be true to the humanistic basis for career education if we failed to include unpaid work in our concept.

As used in career education, the word "work" does not allow for statements that say such things as "He doesn't want to work." Such expressions may well pertain to some individuals' perceptions of the jobs available to them in the world of paid employment, but they have nothing to do with the human <u>need</u> and the God-given <u>right</u> of every human being to experience work - and so to find meaning and meaningfulness in his/her total existence.

<u>Implications of the Career Education Concept for Work Experience Educators</u>

As a final portion of this presentation, I would like to comment briefly on what I regard as several important implications of the career education concept for possible roles and functions of work experience educators. In doing so, I am well aware of the fact that many work experience educators have already changed in many of these ways. I simply want to

set the record straight in terms of my own hopes and aspirations for closer working relationships between career education and work experience education.

First, and most basic, it seems to me there is a clear challenge to consider the possibility of making work experience a general educational methodology - rather than a specific kind of educational program - available for use, in varying ways, in the total teaching/learning process beginning in the early elementary grades and continuing through all of higher education. To accomplish this, it would, of course, be essential that decision makers in education embrace both the concept of work and the importance of experiential learning. I have a feeling that we are closer to that point now than many persons now working in education - including both career education and work experience education - recognize.

Second, it seems to me that the implications of unpaid, as well as paid work experience, hold important challenges for change in the role and functions of work experience educators. I am firmly convinced that, if career exploration is the goal, unpaid work experience in the world of paid employment holds far greater potential than does paid work experience. As the student moves closer to making bonafide occupational choices, paid work experience - including the responsibilities of being productive and fully accountable - become more important. Exploratory, unpaid work experience opportunities - involvong frequent changes in work station assignment - should, it seems to me, begin no later than the junior high school years and should be made available to those students who remain undecided well into the college and university years.

Third, I am firmly convinced that, somewhere in education, we must begin paying more attention than we have in the past to work experience

opportunities designed to help individuals make more productive use of their leisure time. Whether this function will become part of the job description of today's work experience educators or whether someone else will perform it is still an open question. I do not think the need for this kind of activity should be delayed any longer.

Fourth, I am convinced that great and important challenges exist for today's work experience educators in becoming active participants and leaders in attempts to infuse career education concepts into classrooms - from the kindergarten through the graduate college. Helping teachers understand and capitalize on the career implications of their subject matter, obtaining resource persons from the business-labor-industry-professional community for the classroom, observational and exploratory field trips for students into the business-labor-industry-professional community, and the establishment of work simulation centers available to both youth and to adults in the community are some of the kinds of activities I am talking about here.

Fifth, I am firmly convinced that, if they choose to do so, great need and great opportunities exist for work experience educators to be active leaders in teacher inservice efforts in career education. We are much closer to having work experience educators employed at the building level than we are to having "career education specialists" in each school building. My feeling, at this time, is that, while I support the notion of having a career education coordinator at the school system level, I am opposed to creating this new breed of specialists under an assumption that they will be operating at the building level. At the building level, I could see several kinds of persons - including work experience educators, school counselors, or subject matter specialists - serving as the career

education "orchestrator" while the building principal serves as the career education "administrator." It is an opportunity that exists today for many work experience educators. Whether or not you think it wise to seize this opportunity is, of course, up to you.

Concluding Remarks

I have tried here to: (a) make certain basic career education concepts clear so they may be compared with work experience concepts; (b) discuss the concept of work, as a humanizing term, and as the absolute bedrock on which the career education concept exists; and (c) outline several possible implications for change in role and function of work experience educators that grow out of the career education concept. In doing so, my goal has been to provide work experience educators with some basis for determining their own directions for professional change. It is my sincere belief that career education and work experience education belong together. I would hope that some of you may share this belief with me.

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